New Fiction

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the author has written a fine tale of love and adventure in a land which still holds mystery for most of us, the flowering Nile, and the waste of Egyptian deserts. A perfect book for the railway journey or for those who do not care to examine the problems of love but are satisfied with its phenomena! Though Olive Wadsley has no place in literature, she has her place on the bookstalls.

TRILBY MAY CRASHES IN. By Sewell Ford. Harper & Brothers.

TRILBY MAY is the girl Mr. Sewell Ford invented to follow, along with Miss Inez Petersen, in the wake of "Shorty" McCabe. One book about the pair has already appeared. "Trilby May Crashes In," as its title subtly intimates, is another. The action of the new book, in so far as there is any action, hovers around Greenwich Village and little theaters and stage doors. But no one should jump to the conclusion, on this account, that the action bears any relation to life as it is in these environs. It does not.

Mr. Ford's manner is, as the prince so celebratedly remarked of the back slapper's, familiar. Long ago, when the use of slang was in the first heyday of its vogue, he adopted it. Many things have happened since then and many changes besides those in the length of skirts taken place in the world; but Mr. Ford has not changed with them. He has stuck to his formula, and now, as formulas sometimes will, it is beginning to wear a little thin. In the present volume this scrawniness is constantly apparent. It is not, this slang that he uses, enlivened by any of the Gargantuan invention which frequently makes the locutions of such writers as, say "Bugs" Baer, so diverting, nor is it informed by any of the shrewd character drawing and observation which Mr. Ring Lardner can impart to this medium. It is flat, unimaginative, vulgar without being funny. And since slang is primarily the thing upon which the book depends for its effect, this flaw comes perilously near to being fatal.

However, there are many people who can still read Mr. Ford with enjoyment, and there seems no reason why these should not read "Trilby May Crashes In" if they feel that way about it. They will find just about everything they have found heretofore in this writer's work—diluted, to be sure, but there none the less.

THE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS. By Richard Blaker. George H. Doran Company.

CHARLES PETRIE, musical genius, lives his own life apart from his uncongenial family and the surroundings in which his failure as a musician confine him. Petrie finds a response to his aims and ideals in Cynthia, one of his daughters, and frees her to some extent from her environment. He is able to make a career for himself, only to be frustrated in his ambitions. Eventually Petrie triumphs over the circumstances which have contrived to thwart him.

Mr. Blaker's handling of this theme is excellent. Charles Petrie's mental attitude and the matters in which his temperament can admit no compromise are shown clearly. Over against Petrie stands his wife, a weak, domestic parasite in her husband's eyes. As Mrs. Petrie sees herself she is a wife trying to do her duty toward her husband and children. Conflict is inevitable between two such persons. It culminates in a brutal, well handled scene in which Petrie wins his daughter's freedom to study music.

Mr. Blaker's minor characters stand out clear from their background. Definite personalities to the reader are Petrie's children—Sylvia, with her utterly bourgeois personality and ambitions; Cynthia, whose flair for music and freedom struggle constantly against her conventional upbringing; pert Freda and Conrad, with his attractive humor and mechanical turn of mind. Clear cut above them all is Petrie, a distinctive, convincing study of genius. Single minded, ruthless at the demand of his convictions, rather charming and whimsical at times, absorbed and faithful to his belief in life's true values, Petrie is an interesting figure. In the pages of "The Voice in the Wilderness" is shown the conflict between genius and its environment with absolute justice and fairness to the opposed elements.

BREATH OF LIFE. By Arthur Tuckerman. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

UNREST, a troubled uncertainty as to what life is for, which is something more than the normal discontent of youth, continues to find a voice in the more thoughtful and significant fiction by young writers. This novel is a noteworthy example; good enough to be ranked almost with the brilliant performance of Stephen Vincent Benet and, in some sense, a masculine counterpart to Dorothy Speare's "Dancers in the Dark." One could name a half dozen similarly inspired books issued within the last year by hitherto unknown youngsters. This one is very good simply as a narrative, as it is a successful combination of the study of the young men and women in ordinary society with an interlude of high adventure which wanders into the Caribbean and a Latin American revolution. And Mr. Tuckerman's style is notably good.

The hero is a well-to-do young man, entirely normal, intelligent and likable. But he is unable to "find himself" in any of the ordinary jobs. "What you need," his father tells him, rather grimly, "is some good hard work—like I had when I was your age," to which Everett retorts: "There isn't any; at least not the kind I'm eligible for. The world doesn't even work like it used to." Later, talking to the girl he makes a summary worth quoting: "We've been brought up soaked in traditions and conventions, and all of a sudden we've discovered that we can discard them without doing ourselves the least harm—and then we're not happy till we have discarded them." Naturally the book comes to no very dogmatic conclusion, but one feels that somehow these valiant young folks will work out a sound solution for their problems. Mr. Tuckerman should be heard from again in due time.

THE RETURN OF BLUE PETE. By Luke Allan. George H. Doran Company.

IF a book has a glazed jacket whereon a stealthy looking person with a knife at his belt and a stiff-necked pony behind him peers round a clump of trees at the far off, silhouetted figure of a Northwestern Mounted Policeman, and if above that appears the title, "The Return of Blue Pete," in neat hand lettering—well, you have a fairly reliable gage as to what to expect.

In this volume you get it—approximately. The quieter chapters are the ones in which gun play is temporarily discarded for the more intimate contact of knives. The bohunks are responsible for the introduction of the latter weapons. This is one way in which you can tell the bad characters from the good. A bad man stabs, but a good, kind hearted and upright man always shoots. Usually he shoots on sight, whether he knows the person aimed at or not.

The thing round which all the shooting revolves is a trestle. Big Jim Torrence is trying to build it. All the bohunks who are working for him are members of the I. W. W., and they really don't want to have the trestle built at all. This results in complications, mostly at night. But luckily Blue Pete returns. The thing that he returns for is a little flyer in horse stealing. Of course what he really wants to do is restore the horses to their rightful owners; but a good many shots have to be fired before this becomes clearly understood by all concerned. It finally is understood, though, and the bohunks are routed, and that trestle gets built despite everything. The moral appears to be that all things come to him who shoots first.

DON RODRIGUEZ: CHRONICLES OF SHADOW VALLEY. By Lord Dunsany. George P. Putnam's Sons.

IN the first four of these "chronicles" Lord Dunsany is at his very best—with splendidly pictorial imagination and all the magic mystery of his half fairyland, half real landscape of mountains, abysses and unscalable heights, and of fantastically real people among them. The thing is whimsically dated and placed in the "later years of the golden age in Spain," but it is really Dunsany-land and timeless. His Don Rodriguez is a collateral of Don Quixote, somewhat more rational and ethereal, but clearly a relative, and a

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